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DE RUEHGO #1145 3310246
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6896
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0738
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4288
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7829
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5389
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1261
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1188
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS RANGOON 001145

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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

11. (SBU) Summary. Rangoon-based Western missions met on November 21 to discuss the U.S., UK, Australian, and German small grants programs. Grants programs among the embassies focus either on infrastructure development or capacity building. The French Cultural Counselor said that he hoped to lobby Paris for funding to initiate a small grants program based on what he learned from the meeting. Christian Scheibe of the German Embassy recounted that the Ministry of Information had solicited funding from his embassy for a Ministry library project, a request which they refused. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On November 21, the British Embassy hosted a lunch meeting on embassy small grants programs in Burma. Diplomats from the German, Australian, French, and American embassies attended the meeting. Grants programs among the embassies fell into two basic categories: infrastructure development and capacity building. The French are currently working to gain approval for a program from Paris.

13. (SBU) The Australian and German programs focus on infrastructure development. Christian Scheibe of the German Embassy described the focus of his program as promoting livelihood development, building primary schools, and protecting the environment. His total budget for the year is approximately USD 170,000, and he expects that amount to increase in the near future due to renewed German government interest in Burma. Australia's Simon Harrison described his program as similar, although slightly smaller. In the coming year, he expects to have approximately USD 100,000 to support local groups and NGOs in infrastructure development, such as dam building and school and orphanage renovation. While his funds cover some costs of consultants and labor, he cannot pay for training.

14. (SBU) The British Embassy program, like our program, has focused in recent years on capacity building and promoting democracy. This includes funding small library projects and training sessions in topics ranging from farm cultivation to democracy building. British Public Diplomacy Officer Katherine Forsyth said that her total budget is approximately USD 80,000 per year, although she also expects that number to rise with increased interest in Burma.

¶15. (SBU) French Cultural Counselor Stephane Doyert is lobbying Paris to provide funding for a similar small grants program. He hoped that the report to Paris he writes as a result of the meeting would encourage the French government to provide funding for such a program. The French Ambassador told Charge that he has had difficulty persuading Paris of the need for extra funds for Burma, because France already contributes 17 percent of the EC assistance budget, which in Burma primarily goes to health.

¶16. (SBU) After sharing information about the various programs, the group focused on library programs throughout the country. Christian Scheibe said that the Ministry of Information had approached the German Embassy seeking funding for a library that it wanted to build. The embassy, he said, refused to fund the project. The U.S. and UK have not received such proposals for funding from the Ministry of Information.

¶17. (SBU) Comment: Quiet information-sharing with other embassies implementing small grants programs in Burma is an effective way to share best practices. Other embassies have been interested in our quiet success with small grants to promote democracy and civil society. By taking the lead in showing what can be done, we hope to encourage broader assistance to civil society from a variety of sources. This will help us stay under the radar while we thwart the Than Shwe regime's efforts to suppress civil society. End Comment.

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